Tagging sacred space
in the Dura-Europos synagogue
Karen B. Stern

One day in the middle of the 3rd c.[1] a visitor scratched two simple words, "I (am) Ḥiya", into a doorpost of the synagogue in Roman Dura-Europos. The Aramaic letters of the text are carved irregularly and largely enough to have been visible from the building's elaborately decorated assembly hall. But unlike other elegantly painted inscriptions from the synagogue that clearly announce the names and donations of esteemed benefactors, the presence of this terse graffito, limited to a pronoun and a personal name, initially appears inexplicable. How, if at all, can we make sense of this crudely carved text, placed so ostentatiously in this sacred setting?

Modern society might explain this inscription as an outrageous defacement. Some would claim that only an impious or rebellious sort of person would dare to scrawl his name — a so-called *tag* — on a place of worship; according to these views, only social deviance or psychological disturbance might account for such activities.[2] But in regions of the ancient world, whether in Pompeii in the West or in Dura-Europos or Hatra in the East, such an act might have been interpreted quite differently. It would have been considered both unremarkable, because it was so common, and remarkable in a good way, because it offered a means for individuals to communicate with deities and like-minded devotees. Ubiquitous drawings of names, prayers, and cult images found around complexes like Pompeii's temple of Isis and inside Durene temples and Hatran iwans suggest the acceptability, if not desirability, of applying graffiti to walls of cult centers and their precincts.[3] Here I will draw attention to graffiti discovered on one building poised between the cultural worlds of Rome, Mesopotamia and Persia, the synagogue at Dura-Europos.

The building itself has achieved an unlikely fame; to those interested in Jewish populations of late antiquity, the Dura synagogue continues to loom large in the historical imagination. In 1932, excavators discovered the walls of its assembly hall largely intact and adorned with over 70 narrative paintings that included painted labeled images of Moses, Aaron, and other Biblical figures. Portions of the decorated ceiling were also preserved; so too were architectural elements of multiple construction phases, and a liturgical papyrus. The remarkable preservation of components of the Dura synagogue, as well as of its neighboring buildings, has justified continued reliance on its architecture, murals, and associated finds to interpret the social history of late ancient Jewish populations in Dura and to speculate about otherwise unattested practices associated with synagogues and Jewish populations elsewhere in Parapotamia, Mesopotamia and the Levant.

Despite the fame of the synagogue, several of its less glamorous elements, which of course cannot compete visually with the elegant commemorative dipinti on the ceiling or the polychromatic murals complete with labels on the walls, continue to elude scholarly

attention. These include graffiti (irregular and scratched markings), of which at least 47 examples survive, discovered on portions of the synagogue walls and on fragments of door-jambs, door-frames and walls preserved from different structural phases of the building. Some of the Greek and Aramaic graffiti are easy to read, while others appear nearly illegible. Most markings seem so terse, clumsily rendered, and amateurish, that they appear only to justify their serial neglect.[4] I will suggest that graffiti such as the introductory "Ḥiya", merit a second, more lingering glance. Careful examination of the textual graffiti reveals consistent patterns in their syntax and placement, which, in turn, possess extensive analogues in Dura and surrounding regions. I will reconsider the significance of these patterns, particularly in the onomastic and acclamation graffiti, and argue that they attest to overlooked genres of practices once conducted inside the structure: acts of writing these types of graffiti in the synagogue were neither arbitrary nor random, but constituted one important type of devotional practice.

Methodology and its limitations

One might reasonably argue that the imposition of terms such as "graffiti" and "tagging" for discussion of writing and decorative practices in an ancient synagogue is inherently anachronistic and distorting. Technically one could classify as graffiti any engraved marks (usually letters) applied to building surfaces after their completion; differentiation between so-called formal inscriptions and graffiti, then, would rely on estimations of their relative chronology and on subjective evaluations of paleography. Attempts to investigate how the ancients would have classified diversely what appear as sorts of graffiti to the modern eye seem speculative.[5] The integration of additional terms like "tagging" to analyze such graffiti might appear commensurately problematic. "Tagging" colloquially classifies modern acts of spray painting texts and images on public and private spaces that draw attention to the encoded identities of those who apply the markings; a person or collective decorates a surface for publicity and thereby appropriates the structure from its legal owners.[6] In the United States, tagging is often associated with juvenile delinquency or gang membership; in Europe and the Middle East, such markings frequently reflect religious or political protest. Again, influenced by modern practice, it is easy to assume that the intent of such markings, even inside ancient religious spaces, was to deface, but this was not necessarily the case. I suggest that modifications of modern terms such as graffiti and "tagging" bear several advantages for a consideration of activities once conducted inside the Dura synagogue. For the purposes of this analysis, the term "graffiti" serves simply as a provisional analytical category that draws attention to otherwise neglected vestiges of writing and decorative practices. Graffiti and other types of incidental inscription are applied to building surfaces sometime after their completion; and the designation "graffiti" (as opposed to inscriptions or decoration) partly responds to this chronological distinction. In the context of the Dura synagogue, I classify both painted and incised texts as graffiti. This grouping emphasizes collective strategies of graffiti content and placement rather than the precise media of their application.[7] In addition, because basic literacies and writing skills were

---

4   Comparable explanations account for the traditional neglect of Durene graffiti, with the welcome exception of Goldman 1990, 4-6, and the recent publications of Baird 2007; ead. *et al.* 2010.

5   Methodologies related to broader considerations of ancient graffiti in Baird and Taylor 2010, 1-19.

6   Discussion in Snyder 2009, 32-33; 41-43; Lachmann 1988, 237.

7   Medium remains more significant in discussions of Pompeiian writing (e.g., Benefiel 2010a, 59).

complex and varied throughout antiquity, I incorporate some images into this category.[8] Graffiti, as I define them, exclude monumental inscriptions, whose syntax, placement and form largely respond to prevailing conventions of dedication.[9] I largely distinguish graffiti from other types of inscriptions and decoration, then, based on their contents, placement, and relative times of application. This designation avoids reliance on paleography or the aesthetic qualities of words or associated images, whose markings could be classified in entirely distinct ways in other contexts.[10]

Anachronistic references to tagging, likewise, remain useful in interpreting name graffiti at Dura. As J. Baird reasonably cautions in her recent treatment of Durene graffiti, modern tags differ from ancient analogues, partly because they appear to be anonymous; often only limited audiences can decipher their stylized markings.[11] Contents of onomastic graffiti from the synagogue and elsewhere in Dura, by contrast, were comprehensible to all readers of Greek and Aramaic and thereby exhibit an opposite phenomenon: they lucidly render their authors' names. Functions of modern tags, however, extend beyond their representations of encoded names; their application to public surfaces serves as a powerful act that facilitates artists' appropriations of associated spaces.[12] In this particular respect, comparable motivations may have impelled both modern and ancient populations to mark building surfaces. Perhaps some Durenes, for example, wrote their names on specific portions of buildings to draw attention to themselves or their families, or to comparably 'appropriate' architectural features. Despite obvious differences in the cultural contexts, styles and execution of modern and ancient graffiti, I suggest that considerations of tagging in modernity can lead to new perspectives on the application of graffiti in antiquity.

I will emphasize two categories of inscriptions found in the synagogue: name and remembrance graffiti. Focus on these types invites closer consideration of how individuals interacted with their built environments. There were, of course, other kinds of non-literary writing in the synagogue too: written labels for figures depicted in the murals, Persian scribal dipinti, and dedicatory inscriptions on terracotta tiles from the decorated ceiling,[13] but these reflect different strategies of writing than the graffiti, whether because they were designed to respond to images in the murals (labels), record individuals' impressions of their visits to the space (Persian graffiti and dipinti), or explicitly commemorate dedications to the assembly hall (ceiling-tiles).[14] The latter categories reflect distinct strategies of writing and decoration and have been more extensively examined in other contexts.[15]

Attention to both the contents and placement of graffiti remains central to my approach. While epigraphers and art historians often focus on the contents of texts and decoration, a contextual treatment emphasizes the relationship between graffiti contents and their

---

8   Ranges of literacy addressed in Beard 1991; Collins and Blot 2003; Johnson and Parker 2009.
9   Classic example of dedicatory syntax in Hillers and Cussini 1999 (henceforth *PAT*) no.1078. Distinctions between genres of writing are matters of interpretation; Baird and Taylor 2010, 1-10.
10 Comprehensive treatments of graffiti from Dura-Europos have long remained a desideratum; renewed studies of Baird (2010) are critical in this regard; cf. Goldman 1999, 19, n.3.
11 I thank Jennifer Baird for emphasizing this point; also 2010, 56
12 Lachmann 1988, 237
13 Kraeling 1979, 261-320; Rostovtzeff 1936, 387-96; Geiger 1979, 283-317
14 Consideration of building dedications in Noy and Bloedhorn 2004 (henceforth *IJO* III); White 1990; Naveh 1979, 27; and Lifshitz 1959; Stern 2010, 492-94; also Roth Gerson 2001.
15 Fine 2011 explores relationships between synagogue demography and the languages of its dipinti.

precise modes and positions of display. This perspective prompts new questions about the synagogue graffiti and the motivations of their inscribers. Did ancient inscribers, for instance, want others to read their graffiti? Did they scratch names or sentiments in obscure corners of the synagogue building, or did they write in places more easily visible to the general public? How do graffiti in the Dura synagogue compare to examples found in neighboring buildings in which devotional activities also took place? These sorts of questions situate the graffiti spatially and geographically and facilitate their improved evaluation as vestiges of cultural practices.

Recent scholarship encourages renewed consideration of graffiti from buildings like the Dura synagogue. Baird's comprehensive analyses of graffiti discovered throughout Dura-Europos, in conjunction with the resumed excavations, offer improved comparanda for the contextual evaluation of the synagogue graffiti. The recent edition by D. Noy and H. Bloedhorn of Syrian Jewish inscriptions likewise facilitates broader re-evaluations of all texts from the building. Finally, articles and edited volumes of I. Rutherford (2003; 2006), J. Elsner (2006) and D. Frankfurter (1998) highlight connections between graffiti, devotional behaviors and acts of pilgrimage. Discussions of graffiti and dipinti as a means to commemorate visits to sacred spaces in antiquity inspire renewed considerations of the use and re-use of structures associated with Jewish populations in Syria and elsewhere.[16]

Certain factors, however, limit the scope of the examination of the synagogue's graffiti. Studies of names and language use in Dura have yielded important data for the discussion of local demography, but the precise cultural identities of the inscribers of the synagogue's graffiti remain difficult to ascertain.[17] Dura was a polyglot city in which diverse populations, including Jews, Syrian Greeks, Palmyrenes and Arabs, simultaneously drew from their multiple and overlapping cultural, onomastic and linguistic environments.[18] While some dipinti and graffiti from the synagogue include names of explicit Biblical association, such as Samuel (e.g., *Syr*87) and Jeremiah (*Syr*95),[19] other inscribers appear to have borne names similar to those of their neighbors, like Amathbel (*Syr*90) and Arnan (*Syr*92). Thus onomastic and prosopographic analyses of synagogue graffiti can take us only so far in determining the precise cultural identities of those who inscribed them.[20] Some inscribers with Biblical names might have certainly identified themselves as Jews, while other Jews assigned to their children locally conventional names of nondescript cultural provenance. These tendencies caution against simplistic conclusions about cultural identities of inscribers based on their names alone.

Broader cultural interpolation of inscribed scripts and languages requires comparable caution. Neatly painted texts in middle-Pahlavi, for example, cover paintings from the N and W walls of the assembly hall, which depict visions of Ezekiel and Mordechai's triumph. While these dipinti prove the Persian origins of the scribes who visited the synagogue, scholars continue to debate whether their authors were Jewish or non-Jewish Persians.[21] The same conundrum beleaguers interpretations of the Aramaic and Greek graffiti discovered nearby. The presence of diverse graffiti and scribal dipinti in the building illustrates

---

16   Baird 2007 uses graffiti, for example, to reassess traditional identifications of Durene buildings
       assigned during early excavations of the site; see also Langner 2001 and Goldman 1999.
17   Fuller discussions of this point in Stern 2010, 481; Fine 2011.
18   Discussion in Kaizer 2009a, 2009b; Dirven 2004; Sommer 2004; and Taylor 2002.
19   Numbers of these and subsequent synagogue graffiti correspond with those assigned in *IJO* III.
20   Connections between onomastic data and cultural diversity in Dura treated in Sommer 2004.
21   Fine considers the cultural contexts of the Persian scribes in the synagogue (2011, 295-300).

the possibility that multiple populations of Jews and non-Jews, Durenes and non-Durenes, once visited the synagogue and wrote upon its decorated walls. While speculations about the cultural identities of inscribers will be deduced from evidence when warranted, onomastic and linguistic data cannot single-handedly illuminate the cultural identities of those who entered and inscribed the walls.

This approach replaces unanswerable questions about inscribers' cultural identities with considerations of the identifiable behaviors that the inscriptions represent. Sociological and anthropological categories, in particular, situate these acts of writing and decoration as practices conducted in specific spatial and cultural contexts.[22] Reading graffiti as vestiges of ancient cultural practices, including devotional behaviors, expands the possibilities of their analysis here. The presence of graffiti in the final phase of the building, on a basic level, suggests that some individuals considered it desirable or sufficiently appropriate to write or draw names, messages and pictures on the synagogue walls, even if not everyone agreed with the practice. If synagogue patrons or visitors had found these markings intolerable, they might have scratched or painted over them; but extant graffiti bear no overt signs of subsequent defacement or erasure.[23] Preservation of similar graffiti from multiple phases of the building, moreover, suggests the diachronic popularity of writing and painting graffiti throughout the structure. Graffiti thus represent acceptable and consistent acts of physical engagement with the devotional space of the Dura synagogue.

However, practical features of the structure's preservation limit the possibilities of this analysis. Preservation of graffiti from the Dura synagogue remains only partial. While roughly 60% of the wall surfaces from the assembly hall survived from antiquity, the remaining 40%, along with displaced architectural features from earlier stages, were irretrievably lost; and many of the graffiti did not survive 20th-c. efforts of preservation.[24] Measurements are not recorded for several of the graffiti and dipinti, which quickly succumbed to the degradation of the preservative painted onto the surfaces of associated walls. Much of my discussion therefore relies on earlier narrative descriptions, drawings and photographs of graffiti once published by du Mesnil du Buisson and C. Kraeling.[25] Careful consideration of these reports, notes and drawings necessarily replaces autopsy (the preferred means to collect and examine such data).

Graffiti and dipinti were also discovered inside other Durene buildings (e.g., the temples of the Aphlad, Azzanathkona, and the Christian building) where cultic activities took place. The presence of comparable markings inside the synagogue thus offers a rare window into shared and otherwise undocumented devotional practices once conducted by neighboring populations. Such examples of informal writing and decorative practices have never been discovered in other ancient synagogues.[26] Thus the graffiti from the Dura synagogue constitute novel evidence for writing and decorative practices in synagogues in Syria and elsewhere in the Mediterranean world.

---

22 Seminal discussions of practice as a cultural and anthropological category in Bourdieu 1977; considerations of practice in examinations of social dynamics in Schatzki 1996.
23 Contrast the explicit disfigurement of features of the murals: Kelley 1994; Wharton 1992.
24 Brody and Hoffman 2011 discuss the impact of early conservation efforts in Dura.
25 du Mesnil du Buisson 1939; Kraeling 1979.
26 Dipinti of the Palestinian Rehob synagogue may record prayers or dedicatory inscriptions to offer one exception to this pattern, but the texts remain unpublished (Vito 1981, 90-94). I thank S. Gibson for drawing my attention to the dipinti. Also see D. Noy, A. Panayatov and H. Bloedhorn 2004, 261-63.

Fig. 1. W wall of Dura synagogue *in situ* (Yale University Art Gallery, Dura Europos Collection).

Background to the Dura synagogue and its excavation

The unusual preservation of graffiti from the synagogue relates to the history and demise of the city. For over five centuries, Dura-Europos had occupied a strategic position on the Euphrates. As Dura flourished after the 4th c. B.C., populations of Arab, Roman, Palmyrene, Parthian and Syrian Greek traders, manufacturers and soldiers, flooded the city, inflecting its linguistic, onomastic and artistic practices.[27] The cultic and religious climate grew correspondingly diverse over time. Temples built for Hellenistic, Palmyrene, Roman and local deities shared neighborhoods with buildings that Christians and Jews designed for their own use.[28]

Invasions by Sassanian Persians shattered the life of the polyglot Syrian town. The Persian assault appears to have been violent and conclusive, even if the details remain obscure; Sassanids ultimately overtook the city sometime around 256.[29] Attempts to defend it, however, preserved its remains for posterity in an unusual way. In anticipation of the Persian attack, Roman soldiers filled with sand the buildings that abutted the defensive walls to transform them into a series of fortified earthworks that might resist the battering rams of the enemy. Long after the city's destruction, the buildings once incorporated into the defensive embankment, such as the synagogue, continued to resist collapse. Dura's population did not survive Persian attack, but portions of buildings, such as the inscribed and painted synagogue walls, did (fig. 1). Excavations formally began in the 1920s. C. Hopkins discovered the synagogue in the sixth season (1932-33) of Yale University's expedition. Its degree of preservation was unprecedented. Originally converted from a domestic building, the synagogue saw multiple stages of renovation. Its final iteration, called a "bayita" in Aramaic foundation dipinti on the ceiling tiles, was completed sometime around

---

27   Welles 1951, 251-74; Downey 1988, 79-101; Elsner 2007, 259; Kaizer 2009a and 2009b.
28   Durene cult buildings are considered in Downey 1988; Dirven 1999; Kaizer 2009b; and Leriche 1997.
29   Dates of these events remain disputed as described in James 1985 and 2011, and Pollard 2000.

244/245.[30] The ceiling of the assembly hall was decorated and inscribed, and the painted walls depicted narrative texts from the Hebrew Bible.[31] Inscriptions once applied to the ceiling, its walls, and architectural features embraced multiple languages, such as Greek, Aramaic and middle Persian. The discovery transformed the study of Jewish populations of the Late Roman world by exposing the rich and complex relationships between the cultural practices of Jewish populations and those of their neighbors in the Roman East.[32] Study of graffiti potentially nuances this picture even further, by opening up not just the interactions of different populations, but also connections between individuals.

While the original number and placement of many graffiti remain unrecoverable, archaeologists discovered extensive evidence for the application of graffiti on walls and fragments from particular phases of the building. Graffiti from earlier phases (c.150-240) were preserved on intact walls adjacent to the later assembly hall and on architectural fragments embedded in its walls; graffiti from the final stages were discovered *in situ* and in the fill of the earthen embankment covering the building and surrounding structures.[33]

Name graffiti

Graffiti of single words or names, recovered on surfaces of fragments and walls from multiple phases, account for one quarter of the identified texts.[34] One paradigm of this type declares: 'anā' or "I (am)" in Aramaic, followed by a personal name of an individual. One section of a door-jamb found in the débris of the forecourt includes 3 lines of Aramaic graffiti that document a certain "Ḥiya" multiple times:

Ḥiya, son of… I I Ḥiya, son of….(am) their father/chief I Job(?) (*Syr*93).[35]

Another portion of a door-jamb, discovered on the embankment above the assembly hall, reads in 3 lines:

I am Ḥiya… I I am Ḥananī son of Samuel (*Syr*94; see fig. 2).[36]

Additional inscribed segments may commemorate the work of the same prolific Ḥiya but with distinct orthography; these appear to have been carved by other hands. Other examples, which include further names, conform to this genre of onomastic text.[37]

---

30   This renovation date is announced in one of the ceiling dipinti: Stern 2010, 482. Phasing of the synagogue addressed in White 1990, 74-77 and 95-97; Hachlili 1998, 39-45; Wharton 1995; Rosenfeld and Potchebutzky 2009; Levine 2005, 326; du Mesnil du Buisson 1936.

31   Mural iconography treated in Kraeling 1979, 66-254; Elsner 2007; du Mesnil du Buisson 1959; cf. infra n.34.

32   The scholarship is too extensive to summarize here. Seminal treatments include, but are not limited to Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1936, 509-95; Sukenik 1947; Perkins 1973; Kraeling 1979; Gutmann 1988; Weitzman and Kessler 1990; White 1990; Wharton 1995; Hachlili 1998; Jensen 1999; Levine *et al.* 2000; Fine 2005; Elsner 2001, 299; id. 2007, 271-80.

33   For the phasing of synagogue see Kraeling 1979, plans V, VI, and supra n.30.

34   Briefly discussed in Sukenik 1947, 45. Graffiti from the earlier synagogue only include names in Aramaic; those from the later synagogue include Greek and Persian scripts. One Persian graffito on a door-jamb, may contain a name (*Syr*126), while a Greek graffito scratched into the dado below panel WD7(S), may also include a name (*Syr*107), as argued in Roth Gerson (2001, 96-97).

35   Size of letters unrecorded; cf. du Mesnil 1939, 160, 18, from autopsy. I follow Torrey in counting this inscription as 3 (*Syr*93a-c) in Table 1, because of paleographic differences. Such considerations also inform my subdivision of additional graffiti collected in *IJO III* and Torrey 1979. All subsequent transcriptions and translations derive from *IJO III* unless otherwise noted.

36   See the distinct reading and translation of this text in du Mesnil 1939, 162, no. 21.

37   A comparable Aramaic text (*Syr*95) was discovered on stone trim from the later synagogue.

Fig. 2 (top). Graffiti: "I am Ḥiya…" | "I am Ḥananī son of Samuel" (Kraeling 1979, figs. 15-16; Yale University Art Gallery Dura Europos Collection).
Fig. 3 (left below). Dipinto: "Ab" and figure (du Mesnil du Buisson 1936, 77, fig. 4).
Fig. 4a-c (right). Onomastic and remembrance graffiti (du Mesnil du Buisson 1936, fig. 3; 1939, fig. 108).
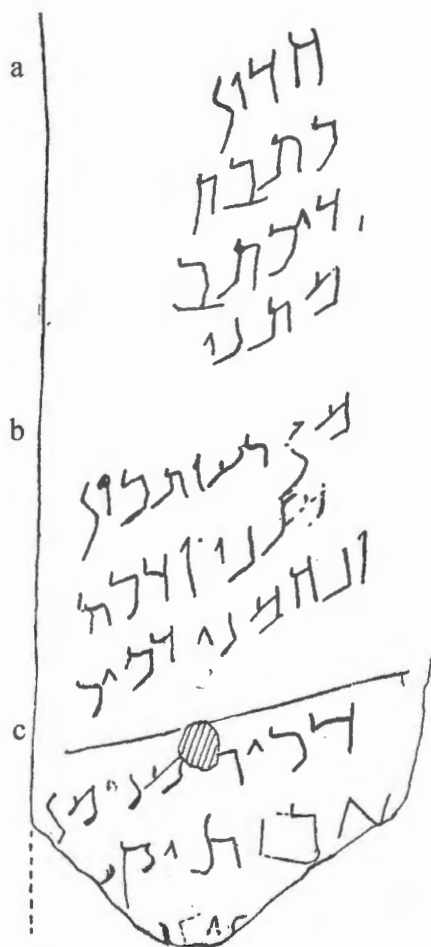
Excavators also discovered clusters of name graffiti near figural drawings on plaster fragments embedded in the wall of the later assembly hall. One displays a textual graffito, 2-4 lines long, which includes letters or images in a third and fourth line; its Aramaic letters may read: `Ab/`Abalmy; this could signify a name (Syr82; see fig. 3). A drawing of a figure, with a head sprouting 6 hairs and face dotted with a mouth and eyes, appears on the right between the first and second lines of the text. The transcription of the text is disputed, but the proximity of the image to the text may suggest a relationship.[38] Such figural drawings, which occasionally accompany "I am PN" graffiti, may visually identify the individuals named in nearby texts.

Remembrance inscriptions

Another common genre of textual graffiti belongs to a category of abbreviated remembrance inscriptions. These nominate individuals, whom the texts request "be remembered" (dkyr/zkyr lw; fig. 4). Multiple examples of this type were recovered on a single plaster door-jamb in Room 7 of the earlier synagogue. The jamb included 3 clusters of Aramaic graffiti of 3-4 lines each. One graffito, which reads:

38 Perhaps the drawing depicts the face of the individual whose name is inscribed, but the translation of the text and its relationship to the accompanying image remain debatable; IJO III, 136; du Mesnil 1937, 170; and Torrey 1979, no.19. Du Mesnil translates the text as: "(Month of)" Ab! Sorrowful mourning!"; CIJ ii, no. 827 (henceforth Frey 1936) reads it as "Abel", a name. Torrey interprets the text differently, as "Father!" (AB) and relates it to the image nearby; 1979, no. 19.

This is the inscription which Matthenai wrote (*Syr*83; fig. 3a),[39]

accompanies additional texts that declare:

> By your leave; Ḥananī and Dakkā and Nahmanī, may he be remembered (fig. 3b), and
> May Minyamin be remembered, the *apothecarius* (?) (fig. 3c).[40]

Despite the clustering of these graffiti and the similarities of their syntax (*dkyr lw*, "may he be remembered"), relationships between the named individuals and the positions of each graffito remain unclear.

In graffiti from the later phase, the remembrance formula is similarly introduced in Greek through the term μνησθῇ, the equivalent of the Semitic *dkyr/zkyr*.[41] One dipinto declares:

> May Amatbel (?) be remembered, and his (?) brother… and….
> (*Syr*90: μνησθ[ῇ]|[Α]μαθβήλ-| ει καὶ ἀδελ[φ-]| ὸς αὐτοῦ|[..]Γ καὶ ΑΙΤΟ[---]) (fig. 5).[42]

Similar terms of remembrance appear in the dedicatory dipinti of the assembly hall ceiling.[43]

Remembrance for good inscriptions

Other texts and images, mostly associated with the later phases of the synagogue, replicate more extensive sentiments of remembrance; these request that nominated individuals specifically "be remembered for good" (*dkyr lṭb*), or assert that texts serve as monuments or "memorials for the good" (*dkr' lṭb*). One bilingual graffito follows this type of "remembrance" formula in Aramaic to read:

> Isaac son of Arnan (Aron?) A good memorial for the good (*Syr*92).[44]

One last text, probably from an earlier phase of the building, follows more complete regional paradigms for remembrance inscriptions, which conventionally nominate the specific deity before whom a named individual seeks remembrance. A displaced dipinto in Aramaic script, discovered *c*.100 m north of the synagogue, includes 6 or more lines in Aramaic. It is restored to read:

> Aḥiyah son of…of the sons of Levi. May he be remembered for good (*dkyr lṭb*) before the
> Lord of Heaven. Amen. This is a memorial for good (*dkr' lṭb*; *Syr*91; fig. 6).

The text follows the complete regional prototype for the sentiment: it nominates an individual (Aḥiyah), includes details about his lineage (of Levi, somewhere down the line), and requests that he be remembered for good (*dkyr lṭb*) and before (*qdm*) a specific named

---

39   This text initially appears to resemble the previous genre of name graffiti, but it emphasizes acts of its inscriber. Du Mesnil differently translates *ktbh* in his reading: "I Menahem, son of Adam, made this painting" (1939, 160, n.14). Such signature graffiti are common in Dura; Baird 2010, 56.

40   Note that the verb in *Syr*83b (*dkyr*) is in the third person singular. Noy and Bloedhorn (2004, 138) state: "This inscription survived from the earlier synagogue and seems to be an acknowledgement of some sort of benefaction. Outside a funerary context, wishes that someone 'be remembered' are invariably the *quid pro quo* for a good deed to the community".

41   Discussion of formula in Rehm 1940, 1-175.

42   The personal name Amathbel is attested in Palmyra and its original position in the structure remains obscure. See discussion in *IJO III*, 155, and *PAT* no. 430.

43   Du Mesnil du Buisson (1939, 162, no. 22) states that the text was painted in green. The μνηθή formula is also replicated on one of the Greek dipinti on the ceiling tiles: "Samuel son of Saphara, may he be remembered (μνηθή), founded these things thus" (*Syr*87); C. B. Welles' translation in Kraeling 1979, 277, no. 24; cf. House of the Archives (Nebucheleus) in Baur *et al* 1933, 82-84.

44   The plaster fragment that preserved this text was discovered close to the embankment by Tower 20; its script, name and epithets point to an origin in the synagogue (*IJO III*, 154-6); du Mesnil du Buisson 1937, 170-73.
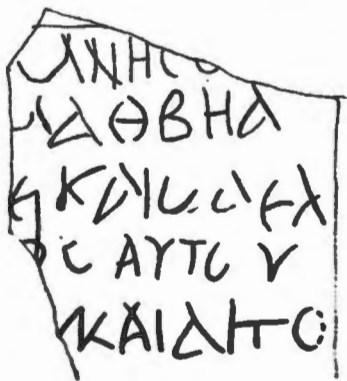
Fig. 5. Dipinto: "Remembered Be Amathbel, and his (?) brother...., and..." (Kraeling 1979, fig. 35; Yale University Art Gallery Dura Europos Collection).
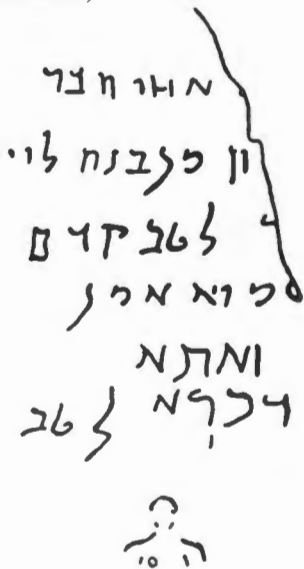

Fig. 6. Aḥiah remembrance graffito (du Mesnil du Buisson 1937, 170).

deity. J. Naveh restores the name and the epithet of the deity here as [*mry š*]*my'* and notes that this text, somewhat unusually, duplicates the request that the named individual ought to be remembered for good.[45] An image of a male torso with a circle on the left breast, and a head without hair and dots for eyes, appears beneath the final line of the text. Perhaps the image of the man visually duplicates the identification of the named individual (fig. 6).

Patterns in name and remembrance graffiti

Certain consistencies emerge in the syntax and placement of these graffiti. All inscriptions are rendered in Aramaic and Greek and include lists of names and various commands for remembrance. How are such texts best interpreted? What explains their stylized content and their ubiquity in the synagogue? What accounts for their inclusion of names or their persistent requests, on behalf of inscribers, that they and their families be remembered for good? In their edition, Noy and Bloedhorn suggest some answers to these questions. They hypothesize that these graffiti should be classified as abbreviated dedicatory inscriptions that follow a distinct local paleography and aesthetic.[46] Their comparability to portions of regional dedicatory inscriptions supports this suggestion: public commemoration through graffiti rewards the benefactions of individuals, who ought to be rewarded or remembered for good, principally because their gifts to the synagogue merited it. Patterns in name, *dkyr/zkyr* and μνησθῇ formulae are commonly replicated in formal dedicatory inscriptions throughout the region: a named donor requests that he or she be remembered, or be remembered for good, in exchange for his or her gifts to a building or a deity. Dedication inscriptions in ritual and cultic contexts, whether in Greek or Semitic scripts, commonly name the gift the individual had donated, or appear as a label *upon* the gift (*stele*, cult statue, stoa, mosaic floor) given.[47] These remembrance formulae also appear on plaques and inscribed mosaic floors of ancient synagogues from Nawā to Sussiya, throughout Syria and Palestine during the Late Roman and Byzantine periods.[48] The popularity of remembrance inscriptions in regional Jewish contexts

---

45   Naveh 1979, 28; id. 1992, 127

46   *IJO* III, 138; patterns of Aramaic writing and pictorial representation at Dura, Hatra and Edessa necessarily exhibit a different "epigraphic habit" than that apparent in the Roman West. Cf. also the related discussion in Kaizer 2009a and Taylor 2002.

47   Durene examples in Kaizer 2009a, 237 and 240-41; *PAT* no. 1067, 1078-81, 1087, 1089.

48   Dedicatory inscriptions appear on the Dura synagogue ceiling (*Syr*85-88) and architectural niche (*Syr*89) and elsewhere in Jewish Syrian contexts (*Syr*23, 35, 75). Others are found in the Beth Alpha, Hammath Tiberias, and Beth Shean synagogues (Roth Gerson 1987, 19, 29 and 69;

particularly substantiates this reading of graffiti from the Dura synagogue.

Attention to the precise syntax of the Dura synagogue graffiti and their exact placement in the building, however, combine to challenge Noy and Bloedhorn's otherwise reasonable explanations, in three key ways. First, with the exception of the dedicatory texts on the Torah niche and on the ceiling, which explicitly nominate donated objects, none of the name or remembrance graffiti, whether upon walls or architectural features, include names of gifts. Second, neither graffiti preserved *in situ* nor those preserved on architectural fragments *necessarily* adorn donated objects. Though the argument that the graffiti were intended to accompany gifts makes intuitive sense, it embeds an underlying assumption about the nature and function of such modes of writing; understanding these texts as hand-written versions of dedicatory inscriptions casts them implicitly as 'slapdash', suggesting a lesser degree of care than in the case of a monumental inscription. Yet these modes of writing may not be the same (see further below). Third, if these graffiti constitute dedicatory inscriptions, why might multiple names of donors be crowded onto identical architectural features, such as door-jambs? Perhaps this practice would indicate that multiple individuals contributed at different times to fund the creation or renovation of one architectural feature (Table 1).[49] Such questions suggest why renewed explanations for the Durene texts may usefully be sought.

Devotional graffiti in local and regional contexts

One of the strongest arguments *against* reading these graffiti as dedicatory inscriptions is that their contents and contexts largely mimic other genres of graffiti consistently discovered elsewhere at Dura and in the region, which do not appear to be dedicatory at all.[50] Durene and Levantine graffiti in Semitic and Greek scripts from comparable periods commonly include names and μνησθῆ formulas like those discovered in the synagogue graffiti. Baird has recently suggested that μνησθῆ graffiti (acclamations) account for 12% of the 1400 or so graffiti discovered in Dura. Regional Semitic inscriptions, moreover, commonly include texts that adhere to Aramaic, Palmyrene, Syriac and Nabataean paradigms for equivalent *dkyr* or *zkyr* formulas. These sentiments are ubiquitous in Greek and Semitic scripts, but do not necessarily signify associated acts of dedication.

Additional similarities between graffiti in the synagogue and elsewhere in Dura also discourage their interpretations as second-class or more sloppily engraved dedicatory inscriptions. Graffiti in the synagogue, in particular, remain largely consistent with analogues discovered in other sacred spaces in Dura. While pictorial graffiti appear throughout the city, name and remembrance graffiti cluster most densely in areas of greatest sanctity, both around temple precincts and directly upon and around altars and cultic niches.[51]

> *Note: Tables 1-5 incorporate only textual graffiti and dipinti discovered on architectural features or decoration of buildings, and exclude those discovered on movable objects.*
> *Numbers with asterisks (*) designate Persian dipinti.*

Naveh 1978).

49   Donations of portions of mosaics are listed in the Apamea synagogue: e.g., *Syr*59-69; Noy 2007.

50   Examples of the formula abound in Healey 1996; Naveh 1979; Al Jadir 1995; Hoftijzer and Jongeling, 1995, 248-49 and 321-30; I thank A. Katrine de Hemmer Gudme for these references.

51   Excavators of Dura noted that verbal graffiti were discovered more frequently than pictorial graffiti in spaces of cultic significance: Rostovteff *et al.* 1934, 15; see Baird 2010, 56.

TABLE 1
SYNAGOGUE: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF ALL GRAFFITI AND DIPINTI
DISCOVERED INSIDE BUILDING
Numbers of inscriptions given here correspond with catalogue of *IJO III*.

Architectural features where graffiti appear	A. Personal name and remembrance graffiti discovered on decorative or architectural feature	B. Total number of graffiti of varied content discovered on decorative or architectural feature	C. Percentage of name and remembrance graffiti on decorative or architectural feature out of total (15) found in building	D. Percentage of inscriptions of varied content on given architectural feature out of total (48) found in building
a. Stone/Plaster trim	*Syr*95: **total 1**	*Syr*95: **total 1**	**6.7%**	**2.1%**
b. Doorjamb	*Syr*83a, 83b, 83c; *Syr*93a, 93b, 93c; *Syr*94a, 94b: **total 8**	*Syr*83a, 83b, 83c; *Syr*93a, 93b, 93c, *Syr*94a, 94b; *Syr*126*: **total 9**	**53.3%**	**18.8%**
c. Doorpost	-	-	-	-
d. Lintel	*Syr*92a, 92b: **total 2**	*Syr*92a, 92b: **total 2**	13%	4.2%
e. Wall: undiagnostic	*Syr*90, *Syr*91, *Syr*107: **total 3**	*Syr*90, *Syr*91, *Syr*107: **total 3**	20%	6.3%
f. Surrounding architectural niche/ altar	-	*Syr*108?: **total 1**	-	2.1%
g. Proximate to image or relief of deity	-	-	-	-
h. Proximate to image of sacrificial/liturgical scene	-	*Syr*96, *Syr*97, *Syr*98, *Syr*99, *Syr*100, *Syr*101, *Syr*102, *Syr*103a-b, *Syr* 104a-c, *Syr*105, *Syr*106, *Syr*109, *Syr*110, *Syr*111*, *Syr*112*, *Syr*113*, *Syr*114*, *Syr*116*, *Syr*117*, *Syr*118*, *Syr*119*, *Syr*120*, *Syr*121*, *Syr*122*, *Syr*123*, *Syr*124*, *Syr*125*: **total 30**	-	64%
i. Unknown location	*Syr*82: **total 1**	*Syr*81, *Syr*82: **total 2**	6.6%	4.2%
j. Total number of graffiti and dipinti in building (rows a-i)	**15**	**47**	**100%**	**100%**
k. Total number of graffiti and dipinti associated with explicitly cultic imagery/contexts (rows f+g+h)	**0**	**31**	**0%**	**65%**
l. Total number of graffiti found around doorways (rows b+c+d)	**10**	**11**	**66.7%**	**23%**

Durene onomastic and remembrance graffiti are usually in Greek, but some include Semitic scripts like Palmyrene or Syriac.[52] Such graffiti constitute a category independent of the dedicatory inscriptions themselves, which explicitly nominate gifts given or directly label objects like votive statues, altars, and cultic reliefs.[53]

Examples of onomastic and remembrance graffiti abound particularly, for example, in the Durene Temple of the Aphlad, only a few city blocks away from the synagogue. While the excavators reported that pictorial and textual graffiti were discovered throughout the entire structure, remembrance inscriptions were found in highest concentrations on the W wall of the temple and *inside* cultic niches (Table 2). Several name graffiti, as well as non-dedicatory inscriptions that include μνησθῇ formulae, were recorded tens of times in these places.[54] The Greek version of the formula is so common in the graffiti that adorn these niches and flank their sides that most instances of the word are abbreviated to the initial letter μ (for μνησθῇ). This abbreviation consistently precedes one or more personal names and occasionally accompanies incised figural images.[55] Name and remembrance inscriptions constitute *c.*87% of the textual graffiti reported in the Temple of Aphlad.[56]

Comparable patterns emerge in the Greek graffiti in the so-called Temple of Azzanath-kona (Table 3). Several acclamations were found scratched onto the background of one cultic niche in room D6 and surrounding the altar of room W7.[57] In this temple too, the majority of textual graffiti include name and remembrance inscriptions, which appear most frequently (over 51%) around cultic images, shrines and architectural niches. Here the remembrance formulae are also abbreviated to the letter μ. Such patterns of graffiti deposit are also replicated in the Mithraeum (Block J7), whose altars and walls were comparably marked with hundreds of examples of name and remembrance requests.[58] One full μνησθῇ inscription even appears in the niche of the baptistery in the Christian building (Table 4).[59] Such graffiti do not appear to violate laws of sanctity as they would in sacred structures today. The ubiquity of these examples instead suggests that these graffiti frequently and appropriately appeared in places of intensified holiness.[60]

If holy spaces constitute conventional locations for the incision of name and remembrance graffiti in Dura, one might expect that comparable graffiti in the synagogue should adorn *its* architectural feature most analogous to a cultic niche, the *aedicula* on its W wall,

52   T. Kaizer (2009a, 237-39) discusses the broader cultural significance of Palmyrene and Syriac graffiti.

53   Cultic features can also appear inside administrative or domestic spaces; see examples in Rostovtzeff 1934, 49, 59; see also Leriche 1997.

54   Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1934, insc. nos. 419-20, 423-26, 444-45.

55   Example in Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1934, insc. no. 439; also in the Azzanathkona temple, no. 440.

56   This type of graffito accounts for *c.*78% of all types of graffiti discovered around cultic features of the building; supra n.54; Table 2.

57   Rostovteff *et al.* 1934, 139. Room D6 appears to have contained a cultic niche and wall. The area behind the cult statue was painted and covered with μ graffiti; Rostovteff *et al.* 1934, 132 and 139; insc. nos. 445, 457, 463-66.

58   These types of graffiti appear to the right of altars in rooms W7 and W11; Rostovteff *et al.* 1934, insc. nos. 454-66. Examples of graffiti from the Mithraeum also include the acclamation of *Nama*! or, perhaps, "blessings!" Texts recorded in Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1939, 116-27; also see Francis 1975 and Baird 2010, 64.

59   Kraeling 1967, 95-96, no. 17.

60   In some centers for administration and mercantile activities, such as the House of Nebucheleus, names and remembrance inscriptions were found also in Greek: Baur *et al* 1933, 81-85.

TABLE 2
TEMPLE OF APHLAD: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF GRAFFITI AND DIPINTI DISCOVERED INSIDE BUILDING

Inscription numbers and find locations from narrative descriptions and catalogue numbers in Hopkins 1934a, 98-130; all inscriptions are in Greek unless otherwise noted.

Architectural features on which graffiti appear	A. Personal name and remembrance graffiti discovered on decorative or architectural feature	B. Total number of graffiti of varied content discovered on decorative or architectural feature	C. Percentage of name and remembrance graffiti on decorative or architectural feature out of total (27) found in building	D. Percentage of inscriptions of varied content on given architectural feature out of total (31) found in building
a. Stone/Plaster trim	-	-	-	-
b. Doorjamb	-	-	-	-
c. Doorpost	-	-	-	-
d. Lintel	1 Safaitic:[*] **total 1**	1 Safaitic: **total 1**	3.7%	3.2%
e. Wall: undiagnostic	n. 435, 436, 440, 444, 445: **total 5**	n. 435, 436, 440, 442, 444, 445: **total 7**	18.5%	22.5%
f. Niche/altar	n. 417, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425a-b, 426, 427, 429, 430, 431?, 433, 443: **total 15**	n. 417, 420, 421, 422, 423, 424, 425, 426, 427, 428, 429, 430, 431, 432a-b, 433, 443: **total 17**	55.6%	55.8%
g. Proximate to image or relief of deity	n. 419, 437, 438, 439, 441:[†] **total 5**	n. 419, 437, 438, 439, 441: **total 5**	18.5%	16.1%
h. Proximate to two-dimensional image of sacrificial/liturgical scene	n. 434: **total 1**	n. 434: **total 1**	3.9%	3.2%
i. Unknown location	-	-	0%	0%
j. Total number of graffiti and dipinti in building (categories rows a-i)	27	31	100%	100%
k. Total number of graffiti and dipinti associated with explicitly cultic imagery/ contexts(f+g+h)	21	23	77.8%	74.2%
l. l. Total number of graffiti found around doorways (rows b+c+d)	1	1	3.7%	3.2%

[*]Precise category of this inscription is unclear. Torrey translates its content at 1932, 66-68; Hopkins (1934a, 100) subsequently associates it with the Temple of the Aphlad.
[†]Inscription numbers 437-39 and 441 appear just above and below wall-paintings, which incorporate images of divine figures.

TABLE 3
TEMPLE OF AZZANATHKONA: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INSCRIPTIONS
DISCOVERED INSIDE BUILDING
Numbers of inscriptions correspond with catalogue of inscriptions in Hopkins 1934b, 131-200.
All graffiti from this building are in Greek unless otherwise noted.

Architectural features on which graffiti appear	A. Personal name and remembrance graffiti discovered on decorative or architectural feature	B. Total number of graffiti of varied content discovered on decorative or architectural feature	C. Percentage of name and remembrance graffiti on decorative or architectural feature out of total (98) found in building	D. Percentage of inscriptions of varied content on given architectural feature out of total (112) found in building
a. Stone/plaster trim	-	-	-	-
b. Door-jamb	n. 496a-f: **total 6**	n. 496a-f: **total 6**	6.1%	5.4%
c. Door-post	n. 497a-b: **total 2**	n. 497a-b: **total 2**	2.0%	1.7%
d. Lintel	n. 494; 495: **total 2**	n. 494, 495, 503: **total 3**	2.0%	2.7%
e. Wall: undiagnostic	n. 451, 459 (list of 12 names), 460, 461, 462, 478, 479, 488, 493, 494, 496d-f, 497b, 498, 499 (list of 5 names), 501, 502, 505, 508, 507: **total 38**	n. 451, 459 (list of 12 names), 460, 461, 462, 478, 479, 480, 481a-c (Latin), 482 (Latin); 483 (Latin), 486 (Latin), 488, 489, 490, 493, 494, 496d-f (3), 497b, 498, 499 (list of 5 names), 501, 502, 505, 507, 508: **total 45**	38.7%	40.2%
f. Architectural niche/ altar or shrine	n. 454 (list of 22 names), 455, 456, 457, 458, 463, 464a-b; 465a-c, 466, 467: **total 34**	n. 454 (list of 22 names), 455, 456, 457, 458, 463, 464a-b, 465a-c, 466, 467: **total 34**	35%	30.4%
g. Proximate to image or relief of deity	n.475, 484?, 487: **total 3**	n.475, 484, 485a-d (Latin), 487, 491a: **total 8**	3.1%	7.1%
h. Proximate to image of sacrificial/liturgical scene	n. 449?, 450 a-h (8), 476, 490, 492, 506; **total 13**	n. 449?, 450 a-h(8), 476, 477, 490, 492, 506: **total 14**	13.3%	12.5%
i. Unknown location	-	-	-	-
j. Total number of graffiti and dipinti in building (categories rows a-i)	98	112	100%	100%
k. Total number of graffiti and dipinti associated with explicitly cultic imagery/contexts (f+g+h)	50	56	51%	50%
l. Total number of graffiti found around doorways (rows b+c+d)	6	11	10.2%	9.8%

TABLE 4
CHRISTIAN BUILDING: SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF INSCRIPTIONS DISCOVERED INSIDE

Numbers of inscriptions correspond with those in Welles 1967.
All graffiti are in Greek unless otherwise noted.

Architectural features on which graffiti appear	A. Personal name and remembrance graffiti discovered on decorative or architectural feature	B. Total number of graffiti of varied content discovered on decorative or architectural feature	C. Percentage of name and remembrance graffiti on decorative or architectural feature out of total (10) found in building	D. Percentage of graffiti of varied content on given architectural feature out of total (18) found in building
a. Stone/Plaster trim	-	-	-	-
b. Door-jamb	n. 6, 7: **total 2**	n. 6, 7, 8, 15: **total 4**	20%	22.2%
c. Door-post	-	n. 14: **total 1**	-	5.6%
d. Lintel	-	-	-	-
e. Wall	n. 3 (Syriac), 9, 10: **total 3**	n. 2, 3 (Syriac), 4, 5, 9, 10, 11: **total 7**	30%	38.8%
f. Vicinity of niche/ altar/cultic space	n. 16, 17: **total 2**	n. 16, 17: **total 2**	20%	5%
g. Proximate to image of deity	-	-	-	-
h. Proximate to image of sacrificial/liturgical scene	n.18, 19, 20: **total 3**	n.18, 19, 20: **total 3**	30%	16.6%
i. Unknown	-	n. 1: **total 1**	-	5.6%
j. Total number of graffiti and dipinti in building (categories rows a-i)	10	18	100%	100%
k. Total number of graffiti and dipinti in explicitly cultic contexts (rows f+g+h)	5	6	50%	33.3%
l. Total number of graffiti found around doorways (rows b+c+d)	2	5	20%	27.7%

but graffiti do not appear in this place; only one inscription that specifically attributes the dedication of the *aedicula* was scratched on its upper surface.[61] While name and remembrance graffiti are clustered in areas of greatest cultic significance throughout the city, their disproportionate appearance (67%) on doorways in the synagogue (Table 5), rather than in other areas presumed to be more sacred in synagogues, such as the aedicula, appears at first sight inexplicable (see Table 1, C/b-d).

Attention to other aspects of paleography provides additional data for the interpretation of synagogue graffiti. Greek and Aramaic dedicatory inscriptions painted onto the

---

61 For drawing of text and extensive discussion of inscription and complete apparatus, see *Syr* 89.

TABLE 5
COMPARISON OF SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF *NAME/REMEMBRANCE* GRAFFITI
IN CULTIC BUILDINGS IN DURA

Architectural location on which graffiti appear	*Temple of Aphlad*	*Temple of Azzanathkona*	*Christian Building*	*Synagogue*
1. Stone or plaster trim	-	-	-	1
2. Door-jamb/post	-	8	2	8
3. Lintel	1	2	-	2
4. Wall/undiagnostic	5	38	3	3
5. Surrounding niche or altar	15	34	2	-
6. Proximate to two-dimensional image/ relief of deity	5	3	-	-
7. Proximate to two-dimensional image of sacrificial/liturgical scene	1	13	3	-
8. Unknown location	-	-	-	1
9. Total number of graffiti and dipinti *in category* discovered in building	27	98	10	15
10. Total number of graffiti and dipinti associated with explicitly cultic imagery/content	21	50	5	-
11. Percentage of graffiti and dipinti found upon features of doorways	4%	10%	20%	67%
12. Percentage of graffiti and dipinti found upon cultic features in two or three dimensions	78%	51%	50%	0%

synagogue ceiling tiles, for example, *are* carefully and clearly rendered, while the graffiti (even the dedicatory graffito on the *aedicula*) are not. This partly relates to the medium of their application; synagogue graffiti, like other local examples, appear to have been rendered with a *stylus* or some other sharp implement into hard-to-carve and friable plaster. Inscriptions incised in this way necessarily won't look good, but they *can* be legible at close range. As Noy and Bloedhorn caution, the seemingly slapdash paleography of the Durene graffiti, whether in Aramaic or Greek, should not fool us into thinking that these texts were casual or unimportant.[62] Sizes of letters, despite their erratic forms, point to inscribers' desires for the inscriptions to be read by visitors. Perhaps the act of inscription itself, in addition to the basic legibility of a text to audiences of various degrees of literacy, took priority over the appearance of the writing. The imperative to inscribe in particular places may have overshadowed aesthetic considerations, heeded elsewhere.

Re-assessment in the regional context

How best, then, to interpret Aramaic and Greek name and remembrance graffiti in the synagogue and elsewhere in Dura? As J. Naveh argues, Semitic graffiti of names and remembrance formulas, which at the maximum include only the first half of typical

---

62   The dedicatory inscription on the synagogue *aedicula* supports this theory: its text explicitly attributes the dedication of the *aedicula*, but its paleography resembles that of non-dedicatory graffiti.

dedicatory formulas, read more like written prayers than dedications.[63] According to him, the inscription of one's name in this genre of graffiti, which often appears on caves and public spaces throughout Mesopotamia and the Roman East, need not signify associated acts of dedication at all; instead, they might express a writer's literal request that passers-by remember or read out loud a name before a specific god in question. A name or remembrance inscription, unlike a dedicatory one, might serve as a type of prayer offered up to the divine.

This type of graffito-prayer encompasses multiple aspects. First, the act of inscribing one's name and/or requesting remembrance for good may serve as a petition in its own right. Second, however, the audience's response to the graffito plays an additional rôle in the perceived efficacy of the text or image. Perhaps the inscriber, whether he recorded his name or requested remembrance, expected building visitors to read out loud the sentiment when they viewed it.[64] The precise placement of the graffito, then, may reflect the inscriber's additional wish that his name or prayer be recited out loud in the specific location of the graffito, particularly before an associated deity.

Phrases in comparable graffiti from regional cultic contexts substantiate these interpretations of graffiti at Dura. An Aramaic graffito from an *iwan* in a temple complex in nearby Hatra, for example, explicitly obligates passers-by to vocalize the name(s) it records before the local gods Māran, Mārtan and Barmarēn. It cautions:

> …The curse of [Māran] against anyone who reads this inscription [and does not say, 'Remembered] for good and excellence before Māran be….[PN]'.[65]

Sentiments in this and comparable texts suggest that aspects of such graffiti are dialogical: viewers' responses to these inscriptions remain an important component of their efficacy.[66] Perhaps the vocalization of an individual's name or remembrance request somehow 'activated' the associated graffito-prayer; analogues for this expectation abound in discussions of ancient magic and medicine.[67] An inscriber's act of writing, combined with vocal repetitions of his sentiment, then, might doubly assure a named individual's remembrance, both by humans and by the intended deity.[68] Rare but explicit invocations of curses for those who read a graffito, but do not recite its contents out loud, underscore the importance of an audience's response. Engraving and vocalizing name and remembrance graffiti on walls and doorways, might have served as one form of responsive devotional practice, or prayer, once conducted inside many buildings, including the Dura synagogue.

But if name and remembrance graffiti in Dura and throughout the region might best be interpreted as recorded prayers or a different devotional activity, why in the synagogue are these types of graffiti unusually clustered on architectural features like door-jambs? The most pragmatic response would say that the disproportionate presence of graffiti around

---

63   Naveh 1979, 27-28.
64   A Greek graffito from a burial cave in southern Israel literally expresses this request, as it commands: "remember the writer, the reader, and me": Kloner 1985, 99.
65   Translation in Al-Jadir 1995, 306. The fullest expression of this formula compels the passer-by to vocalize the writer's name and anticipates punishment for the reader who does not comply.
66   Innovative approach to dialogical qualities of graffiti presented in Benefiel 2010a, 65-81 and 2010b.
67   Bohak (2008, 411) considers *voces magicae* and connections between speech and magical efficacy.
68   I use the masculine pronoun because have I found no examples of graffiti explicitly inscribed by women in Dura; see the related discussion in Stern 2010, 498-500.

synagogue doorways might relate to the logistics of preservation; architectural features like lintels and door-jambs remain more durable than other parts. Alternatively, the presence of graffiti in synagogue doorways might accommodate anticipated patterns in foot traffic; if one wanted his name to be recited by visitors, the placement of his name-graffito around a much-frequented assembly-hall door would seem like a smart decision. But another element of the synagogue's excavation might suggest less obvious reasons for the prevalence of name and remembrance graffiti on and around doorways. This relates to excavators' discovery of deposits of finger bones in the bases of door sockets that once bordered the main doorway of the synagogue assembly hall.[69] Kraeling records that:

> The doorpost pivoted in the hollowed block and rested on the iron plate. Toward the east the cavity housing the socket had a noticeable extension ... This lay under the doorsill itself, being gouged out of the rubble bedding upon which the sill was set. In the pocket of the cavity was found a collection of bones that are reported to have been parts of two human fingers. Their presence at this point cannot have been the result of an accident, because of the genuine inaccessibility of the pocket and because of the discovery of analogous remains in the socket of the south doorway. The bones, whatever their character, must therefore represent a foundation deposit of the kind known to us also at Dura from pagan structures.[70]

Kraeling diagrams the discovery and describes the bones, protected from the door hinge by a metal plate, as comparable to burials discovered nearby in pagan temples (figs. 7-8).[71]

For several reasons, J. Magness has argued against Kraeling's interpretation that these bones constitute a "foundation deposit".[72] She reasonably suggests, more broadly, that the bones may have been deliberately buried under the door to serve some sort of apotropaic function in the synagogue — to protect the building itself or those who entered and exited the adjacent space.[73] The sealing of the socket with a metal plate suggests the deliberate protection of the deposit at the limits of the adjacent room. Further, the structural and decorative elaboration of doorways might not surprise in a building in this region. Portals were associated with divine powers in multiple Mediterranean cultures.[74] Among Roman populations, manifestations of Janus protected the liminal architectural position and function of doorways. In Mesopotamia, frequent appearances of door imagery on cylinder seals and in cultic contexts suggest the persistence over a long period of comparable beliefs.[75]

Doors also possessed additional significances within traditions specifically associated with Biblical texts. Elaboration of doorways is similarly evident in local Christian contexts. Five of the 18 textual graffiti from the Durene Christian building were discovered directly

---

69   Some have disputed whether the bones were emplaced before or during the transformation of the synagogue. For the present discussion chronological distinctions matter little; the precise position of the bones relates to features of the doorway. See the discussion in Fine 2009, 132.

70   Kraeling 1979, 19; also treatment by Magness 2010, 145-46.

71   Ellis 1968; Rabbinic texts (e.g., bT *Berakhot* 18b) describe doorpost as places for hiding possessions.

72   Magness (2010, 146) notes, among other distinctions, that regional building deposits were more conventionally built into walls or under floors, rather than placed inside doorposts.

73   Fine (2011, 299) explains differently the placement of a Persian graffito (*Syr*126) on the door of the assembly hall, that it "may have reminded visitors to approach the synagogue with a sense of purpose ... perhaps parallel to Rabbinic texts that command those coming to the synagogue not to dawdle".

74   Illustrations of regional iconography of doors in Rostovtzeff *et al.* 1936, pl. XXIX.

75   Comprehensive discussion of the doorway in Jewish contexts in Goldman 1986.

A·DOORPOST
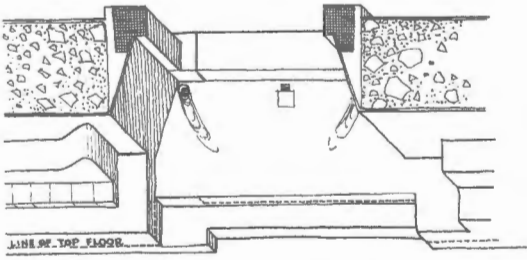B·BLOCK
C·PLATE
D·PLASTER
E·BEDDING
F·CAVITY
G·SILL

Fig. 7. Reconstruction of main doorway to synagogue assembly hall (Kraeling 1979, 18, fig. 5; Yale University Art Gallery Dura Europos Collection).
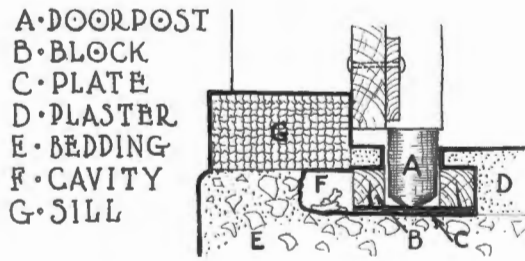
Fig. 8. Diagram of doorpost from main doorway, synagogue assembly hall (Kraeling 1979, 19, fig. 6; Yale University Art Gallery Dura Europos Collection).

on doorways, and many of the rest surrounded them (Table 4 C/l).[76] Biblical injunctions to write words of divine commandments "on the doorposts of your house and on your gates" (*Dtr.* 6:9), moreover, were variously interpreted among Jewish, Samaritan, and Christian populations.[77] Common inscriptions of prophylactic prayers and Biblical verses in Semitic and Greek scripts around door-frames in Late Roman and Byzantine Syria and Palestine also suggest that such customs grew increasingly common in surrounding regions. Subsequent Jewish traditions of emplacing *mezuzot* on doorposts may respond to comparable Biblical directives.[78]

Impulses to hide bones beneath the synagogue doorways, to inscribe Biblical and prophylactic verses around doorframes, and to incise name and remembrance graffiti on lintels and door-jambs in Dura might respond to independent cultural impulses. Still, the accrued cultural force of the architectural space of the doorway suggests otherwise. Some individuals, for multiple reasons, might have believed that amulets, wishes or prayers were simply more powerful in such places. Perhaps entrances to the synagogue assembly hall, just like doorways of the earlier synagogue and cult niches in other Durene buildings, were considered to be loci of greater significance or sanctity. These were places where the inscription of names and their spoken repetition might be particularly powerful, or more easily communicated to the divine.

In a nuanced discussion of "vicarious sacrality", J. Branham has suggested that scholars often overlook the heterogeneity of sanctity in spaces such as ancient synagogues.[79] Common assumptions dominate, which posit that certain areas of synagogues were necessarily considered most sacred to visitors, like places in which a Torah scroll was stored or read. As Branham rightly suggests, however, sanctity in synagogues need not have been competitive or exclusive. Populations who built and visited the Dura synagogue might have also believed that additional features of the building, such as doorways, were also powerful and particularly connected to divinity. If this were the case, doorways would be among

---

76   Name, remembrance, and abecedary graffiti surrounded doorways (nos. 2-5, 9-17 and 19-20); were placed directly on doorjambs (nos. 6-8 and 15), or doorposts (no. 14); Kraeling 1967.

77   Cf. Jos., *AntJ* 4.8.13. A stone doorway from Palmyra was inscribed with the *shema* and other Biblical passages (Dtr. 6.4-9; 7.14-15; 28.5); see Naveh and Shaked 1993, 30; Roth Gerson 2001, 277-80; *Syr*44). Inscriptions of prayers and scripture appear on doorways of Christian and Samaritan buildings in N Syria (e.g., Prentice 1922, nos. 839, 842, 911) and in Byzantine Palestine.

78   G. Bohak (1998, 64) suggests that *mezuzot* included liturgical texts and, occasionally, names of angels.

79   Branham 1995, 320, 332 and 342-45.

the best places to inscribe and solicit repetition of one's name out loud and before the divine. Tagging doorways might have served as a specific act of self-advocacy or personal prayer among the populations who visited the Dura synagogue.

Conclusions

A reconsideration of data such as graffiti reveals otherwise undocumented features of devotional practices associated with Jewish and non-Jewish populations in Dura and elsewhere. To some acolytes in the Dura-Europos synagogue, for example, commending oneself to the divine might have required the performance of good deeds, pronouncements of liturgy, or recitations of texts from the Torah — activities often associated with the synagogue in Rabbinic and Early Christian literary descriptions. But visitors to ancient synagogues, whether non-Jews or Jews, may have understood sacred space and interacted with it differently than scholars often assume. Some might have engraved, painted or recited names and remembrance requests on doorways to serve as another genre of devotional practice, or prayer, once conducted inside the synagogue. Graffiti serve as the only witness to these activities.

This evaluation of the synagogue graffiti challenges common assumptions about what qualifies as data for Jewish populations in the ancient world. No archaeological evidence comparable to the walls of the Dura synagogue survives from other regions, but the ranges of devotional practices associated with it may have been replicated in other places as Jewish populations manipulated local practices of inscription, decoration and recitation, to comparably commend themselves, their loved ones, and their communities, to the divine.

Finally, consideration of the contents and placement of graffiti in the synagogue and other cultic buildings demonstrates substantive continuities among communities in Dura often assumed to be exclusive. Scholars traditionally emphasize how resemblances between the architectural and decorative programs of buildings signify common cultural forms among Dura's diverse populations, but graffiti demonstrate in more substantive ways how individuals engaged in common modes of devotional practice across cultic and religious lines: visitors to temples of the Aphlad, Azzanathkona, Mithras, to the Christian building and the synagogue, collectively scratched their names and remembrance requests around sacred spaces to compete for divine and human recognition.

Discrepancies in patterns of graffiti application in Dura, both with respect to language and placement, have also highlighted more nuanced ways in which Jewish devotees manipulated locally conventional practices to reflect distinct conceptions of sacred spatiality. Just as concentrations of graffiti around temple altars respond to notions of sanctity among worshippers in pagan shrines, so too does their relative density around doorways reflect particularized understandings of sacred space among synagogue visitors. At Dura, verbal graffiti, usually viewed in the modern world as marks of profanation, served as indices of sanctity, enabling Jews and their Durene neighbors to vie for access to the divine.

kstern@brooklyn.cuny.edu   Department of History, Brooklyn College of the City
University of New York

Acknowledgements

Bibliography

Al-Jadir, A. H. 1995. "A new inscription from Hatra," *Semitic Studies* 51, 305-11.

Bagnall, R. 2011. *Everyday writing in the Graeco-Roman East* (Berkeley, CA).

Baird, J. A. 2007. "Shopping, eating and drinking at Dura-Europos: reconstructing contexts," in L. Lavan, E. Swift and T. Putzeys (edd.), *Objects in context, objects in use: material spatiality in Late Antiquity* (Leiden) 413-37.

Baird, J. A. 2010. "The graffiti of Dura-Europos: a contextual approach," in iid. (edd.) 2010, 49-68.

Baird, J. A. and C. Taylor 2010. "Ancient graffiti in context: Introduction," in iid. (edd.) 2010, 1-19.

Baird J. A. and C. Taylor (edd.) 2010. *Ancient graffiti in context* (New York and Abingdon).

Baur, P. V. C., M. I. Rostovtzeff, and A. Bellinger (edd.) 1933. *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: preliminary report of the fourth season of work (1930-1931)* (New Haven, CT).

Beard, M. 1991. "*Ancient literacy* and the function of the written word in Roman religion," in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman world* (JRA Suppl. 3) 35-58.

Benefiel, R. 2010a. "Dialogues of ancient graffiti in the House of Maius Castricius in Pompeii," *AJA* 114, 59-101.

Benefiel, R. R. 2010b. "Dialogues of graffiti in the House of the Four Styles at Pompeii (Casa dei Quattro Stili, I.8.17,11)," in Baird and Taylor (edd.) 2010, 20-48.

Bohak, G. 2008. *Ancient Jewish magic: a history* (Cambridge).

Bourdieu, P. 1977. *Outline of a theory of practice* (Cambridge).

Branham, J. R. 1995. "Vicarious sacrality: temple space in ancient synagogues," in D. Urman and P. Flesher (edd.), *Ancient synagogues: a historical analysis and archaeological discovery* (Leiden) 319-46.

Brody, L. R. and G. L. Hoffman (edd.) 2011. *Dura-Europos: crossroads of antiquity* (Chestnut Hill, MA and Chicago, IL).

Collins, J. and R. K. Blot 2003. *Literacy and literacies: texts, power, and identity* (Cambridge).

Cooley, A. and M. G. L. Cooley (edd.) 2004. *Pompeii: a sourcebook* (London and New York).

Dirven, L. 1999. *The Palmyrenes of Dura-Europos: a study of religious interaction in Roman Syria* (Leiden).

Dirven, L. 2004. "Religious competition and the decoration of the sanctuaries: the case of Dura-Europos," *Eastern Christian Art* 1, 1-20.

Downey, S. 1988. *Mesopotamian religious architecture: Alexander through the Parthians* (Princeton NJ).

du Mesnil du Buisson, R. 1936. "Les deux synagogues successives à Doura-Europos," *RB* 45, 72-90.

du Mesnil du Buisson, R. 1937. "Sur quelque inscriptions juives de Doura-Europos," *Biblica* 18, 153-73 and 458-59.

du Mesnil du Buisson, R. 1939. *Les peintures de la synagogue de Doura-Europos, 32 avant J.C. à 256 après J.C.* (Rome).

Ellis, R. 1968. *Foundation deposits in ancient Mesopotamia* (New Haven, CT).

Elsner, J. 2001. "Cultural resistance and the visual image: the case of Dura Europos," *CPh* 96, 269-304.

Elsner, J. 2007. *Roman eyes: visuality and subjectivity in art and text* (Princeton, NJ).

Elsner, J. and I. Rutherford (edd.) 2006. *Pilgrimage in Graeco-Roman and Early Christian antiquity: seeing the gods* (Oxford).

Ferrell, J. 1996. *Crimes of style: urban graffiti and the politics of criminality* (Boston, MA).

Ferrell, J., K. Hayward, W. Morrison and M. Presdee (edd.) 2004. *Cultural criminology unleashed* (London).

Fine, S. 2005. *Art and Judaism in the Greco-Roman world: toward a new Jewish archaeology* (Cambridge).

Fine, S. 2009. "Symposium on the Dura-Europos synagogue paintings, in tribute to Dr. Rachel Wischnitzer, November, 1968: The contributions of Morton Smith and Meyer Schapiro," *Images* 3, 129-41.

Naveh, J. and S. Shaked 1993. *Magic spells and formulae: Aramaic incantations of late antiquity* (Jerusalem).

Noy, D. 2007. "The Jews of Roman Syria: the synagogues of Dura Europos and Apamea," in R. Alston and S. N. C. Lieu (edd.), *Aspects of the Roman East: papers in honour of Fergus Millar FBA*, vol. I (Turnhout) 62-80.

Noy, D. and H. Bloedhorn 2004. *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* vol. 3: *Syria and Cyprus* (Tübingen).

Noy, D., A. Panayatov and H. Bloedhorn 2004. *Inscriptiones Judaicae Orientis* vol. 1: *Eastern Europe* (Tübingen).

Perkins, A. L. 1973. *The art of Dura-Europos* (Oxford).

Pollard, N. 2000. *Soldiers, cities and civilians in Roman Syria* (Ann Arbor, MI).

Prentice, W. K. 1922. *Syria: publications of the Princeton University archaeological expeditions to Syria in 1904-5 and 1909. Division III, Greek and Latin inscriptions. Section B, Northern Syria* (Leiden).

Rehm, A. 1940. "MNESTHE," *Philologus* 39, 1-175.

Rosenfeld, B.-Z. and R. Potchebutzky 2009. "The civilian-military community in the two phases of the synagogue at Dura Europos: a new approach," *Levant* 41, 195-222.

Rostovtzeff, M. I. (ed.) 1934. *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: preliminary report of the fifth season of work (1931-1932)* (New Haven, CT).

Rostovtzeff, M. I., A. R. Bellinger, C. Hopkins, and C. B. Welles (edd.) 1936. *Excavations at Dura Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: preliminary report of the sixth season of work (October 1932–March 1933)* (New Haven, CT).

Rostovtzeff, M. I. *et al.* 1939. *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: preliminary report of the seventh and eighth seasons of work (1933-1934; 1934-1935)* (New Haven, CT).

Roth-Gerson, L. 1987. *The Greek inscriptions from the synagogues in Eretz-Israel* (Jerusalem) [Hebrew].

Roth-Gerson, L. 2001. *Jews of Syria as reflected in the Greek inscriptions* (Jerusalem) [Hebrew].

Rutherford, I. 2003. "Pilgrimage in Greco-Roman Egypt: new perspectives on graffiti from the Memnonion at Abydos," in R. Matthews and C. Roemer (edd.), *Ancient perspectives on Egypt* (Portland, OR) 131-50.

Schatzki, T. R. 1996. *Social practices: a Wittgensteinian approach to human activity and the social* (Cambridge).

Snyder, G. 2009. *Graffiti lives. Beyond the tag in New York's urban underground* (New York).

Sommer, M. 2004. "A map of meaning. Approaching cultural identities at the Middle Euphrates (1st to 3rd centuries AD)," *Egitto e Vicino Oriente* 27, 153-83.

Stern, K. B. 2010. "Mapping devotion in Roman Dura Europos: a reconsideration of the synagogue ceiling," *AJA* 114, 473-504.

Sukenik, E. 1947. *The synagogue of Dura-Europos and its paintings* (Jerusalem) [Hebrew].

Taylor, D. G. 2002. "Bilingualism and diglossia in late antique Syria and Mesopotamia," in J. N. Adams, M. Janse and S. Swain (edd.), *Bilingualism in ancient society — language, contact and the written text* (Oxford) 298-331.

Torrey, C. C. 1979. "Inscriptions: the Aramaic texts," in Kraeling 1979, 261-76.

Torrey, C. C. 1932. "Semitic inscriptions," in P. V. C. Baur, M. I. Rostovtzeff and A. Bellinger (edd.), *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University: preliminary report of third season of work, November 1929-March 1930* (New Haven, CT) 66-71.

Vito, F. 1981. "The synagogue at Rehob," in L. I. Levine (ed.), *Ancient synagogues revealed* (Jerusalem) 90-94.

Weitzmann, K. and H. L. Kessler (edd.) 1990. *The frescoes of the Dura synagogue and Christian art* (Washington, D.C.).

Welles, C. B. 1951. "The population of Roman Dura," in P. R. Coleman-Norton (ed.), *Studies in economic social history in honor of Allan Chester Johnston* (Princeton, NJ) 251-74.

Welles, C. B. 1967. "Graffiti and dipinti," in Kraeling 1967, 89-100.

Welles, C. B. 1979. "Inscriptions: the Greek texts," in Kraeling 1979, 277-82.

Wharton, A. J. 1995. *Refiguring the post classical city: Dura Europos. Jerash, Jerusalem, and Ravenna* (Cambridge).

Wharton, A. J. 2000. "Erasure: eliminating the space of late ancient Judaism," in L. I. Levine and Z. Weiss (edd.), *From Dura to Sepphoris: studies in Jewish art and society in late antiquity* (JRA Suppl. 40) 195-214.

White, L. M. 1990. *Building God's house in the Roman world: architectural adaptation among Pagans, Jews and Christians* (Baltimore, MD and London).

Fine, S. 2011. "Jewish identity at the *limus*: the earliest reception of the Dura Europos synagogue paintings," in E. Gruen (ed.), *Cultural identity in the ancient Mediterranean* (Los Angeles, CA).

Francis, E. D. 1975. "Mithraic graffiti from Dura Europos," in J. R. Hinnells (ed.), *Mithraic Studies*, vol. II: *Proc. 1st Int. Congress of Mithraic Studies* (London) 424-45.

Frankfurter, D. (ed.) 1998. *Pilgrimage and holy space in late antique Egypt* (Leiden).

Frey, J.-B. 1952. *Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*, vol. ii: *Asie-Afrique* (Rome).

Geiger, B. 1979. "The Middle Iranian texts," in C. Kraeling (ed.), *The synagogue* (The excavations at Dura-Europos, final report 8/1; New Haven, CT) 283-317.

Goldman, B. 1990. "Foreigners at Dura-Europos: pictorial graffiti and history," *Le Muséon* 103, 5-25.

Goldman, B. 1999. "Pictorial graffiti of Dura-Europos," *Parthica* 1, 11-38.

Goldman, B. 1986. *The sacred portal: a primary symbol in ancient Judaic art* (2nd edn., Lanham, MD).

Gutmann, J. 1988. "The Dura Europos synagogue paintings and their influence on later Jewish and Christian art," *Artibus et Historiae* 17, 25-29.

Hachlili, R. 1998. *Ancient Jewish art and archaeology in the diaspora* (Leiden).

Healey, J. F. 1996. "May he be remembered for good: an Aramaic formula," in K. J. Cathcart and M. Maher (edd.), *Targumic and cognate studies: essays in honour of Martin McNamara* (JSOT Suppl. 230, Sheffield) 177-86.

Hillers, D. and E. Cussini 1999. *Palmyrene Aramaic texts* (Publications of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon Project; Baltimore, MD and London).

Hoftijzer, J. and K. Jongeling (edd.) 1995. *"dkr"* and *"zkr,"* in *Dictionary of the North-West Semitic Inscriptions* (Handbook of Oriental Studies I/2; Leiden) 248-49 and 321-30.

Hopkins, C. 1934a. "The Temple of the Aphlad," in M. I. Rostovtzeff (ed.), *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: preliminary report of the fifth season of work (1931-1932)* (New Haven, CT).

Hopkins, C. 1934b. "The Temple of Azzanathkona," in M. I. Rostovtzeff (ed.), *Excavations at Dura-Europos conducted by Yale University and the French Academy of Inscriptions and Letters: preliminary report of the fifth season of work (1931-1932)* (New Haven, CT).

James, S. 1985. "Dura-Europos and the chronology of Syria in the 250s AD," *Chiron* 15, 111-24.

James, S. 2011. "Stratagems, combat, and 'chemical warfare' in the siege mines of Dura-Europos," *AJA* 115, 69-101.

Jensen, R. 1999. "The Dura Europos synagogue, Early Christian art, and the religious life of Dura," in S. Fine (ed.), *Jews, Christians and Polytheists in the ancient synagogue* (London) 174-89.

Johnson, A. and H. Parker 2009. *Ancient literacies: the culture of reading in Greece and Rome* (Oxford).

Kaizer, T. 2009a. "Religion and language in Dura-Europos," in H. Cotton *et al.* (edd.), *From Hellenism to Islam: cultural and linguistic change in the Roman Near East* (Cambridge) 235-53.

Kaizer, T. 2009b. "Patterns of worship in Dura-Europos: a case study of religious life in the Classical Levant outside the main cult centres," in C. Bonnet, V. Pirenne-Delforge and D. Praet (edd.), *Les religions orientales dans le monde grec et romain, cent ans après Cumont (1906-2006). Bilan historique et historiographique, Colloque de Rome, 16-18 Novembre 2006* (Brussels and Rome) 153-72.

Kelley, C. P. 1994. "Who did the iconoclasm in the Dura synagogue?" *BASOR* 295, 57-72.

Kloner, A. 1985. "New Jewish inscriptions from the 'Darom'," *Qadmoniot* 71-72, 96-100 [Hebrew].

Kraeling, C. 1967. *The Christian building* (The excavations at Dura-Europos. Final report 8/2; New Haven, CT).

Kraeling, C. 1979. *The synagogue* (The excavations at Dura Europos. Final report 8/1; 2nd edn., New Haven, CT).

Lachmann, R. 1988. "Graffiti as a career and ideology," *Am. J. Sociology* 94, 229-50.

Langner, M. 2001. *Antike Graffitizeichnungen. Motive, Gestaltung und Bedeutung* (Wiesbaden).

Leriche, P. 1997. "Matériaux pour une réflexion renouvelée sur les sanctuaires de Doura-Europos," *Topoi* 7, 889-913.

Levine, L. I. 2005. *The synagogue: the first thousand years* (2nd edn., New Haven, CT).

Lifshitz, B. 1967. *Donateurs et fondateurs dans les synagogues juives: repértoire des dédicaces grecques relatives à la construction et à la refection des synagogues* (Paris).

Magness, J. 2010. "Third century Jews and Judaism at Beth Shearim and Dura Europus," in D. M. Gwynn, S. Bangert and L. Lavan (edd.), *Religious diversity in late antiquity* (Leiden) 135-66.

Naveh, J. 1978. *On stone and mosaic: the Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions from ancient synagogues* (Jerusalem). [Hebrew]

Naveh, J. 1979. "Graffiti and dedications," *BASOR* 235, 27-30.

Naveh, J. 1992. *On sherd and papyrus: Aramaic and Hebrew inscriptions from the Second Temple, Mishnaic, and Talmudic periods* (Jerusalem) [Hebrew].